

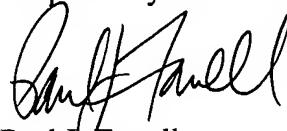
REMARKS

Applicants respectfully elect, without traverse, Group II, i.e., Claims 9-13 and 17-21, for prosecution on the merits. Applicants reserve the right to file a divisional application to the non-elected claims.

On October 7, 2003, a Preliminary Amendment was filed in this application, requesting cancellation of Claims 1-16. However, as is evident from the present Office Action, and confirmed during a telephone conference between Examiner Torres and the undersigned, the Preliminary Amendment was never received by the Examiner and, therefore, does not exist in the file at the Patent Office. If the Preliminary Amendment is located, it is requested that the Examiner contact the undersigned before issuing a next Action, as it is Applicants' intention to maintain Claims 9-13 in the application as indicated above.

Should the Examiner have any questions, he is requested to contact the undersigned at the number indicated below. Early and favorable consideration of the claims is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,



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